

Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SY-10 USSS-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 PRS-01

CPR-01 DRC-01 /062 W

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O R 171304Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7502

INFO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

S E C R E T BANGKOK 16275

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, TH

SUBJ: FORMER PRIME MINISTER THANOM LEAVES FOR THE US

REF: BANGKOK 16202 (NOTAL)

1. FORMER PRIME MINISTER THANOM KITTIKACHORN AND HIS PARTY LEFT BANGKOK FOR BOSTON THE NIGHT OF OCTOBER 16 ON TWA 811, AFTER HAVING OBTAINED TOURIST VISAS FROM THE EMBASSY. THE OCTOBER 17 "BANGKOK POST" CARRIED AN ESSENTIALLY CORRECT VERSION OF THE DEPARTURE.

2. WE CAN ONLY SPECULATE ON THE REASONS THAT THANOM CHOSE NOT TO LEAVE WITH FORMER DEPPUTY PRIME MINISTER PRAPHAT CHARUSATHEIRN, WHO DEPARTED 24 HOURS EARLIER FOR TAIPEI. (THAI RADIO ANNOUNCED OCTOBER 15 THAT THANOM, PRAPHAT AND NARONG HAD ALL THREE LEFT THAILAND.) HE MAY HAVE WISHED TO DISASSOCIATE HIMSELF FROM PRAPHAT, OR HE MAY HAVE WANTED TO WAIT ANOTHER DAY TO OBSERVE EVENTS TO SEE WEHTER THERE WAS SOME POSSIBILITY OF STAYING IN COUNTRY.

3. MINISTER OF DEFENSE, DAWEE, WHO WAS CLOSE TO THE SITUATION, TOLD AMBASSADOR AND DCM OCTOBER 17 THAT
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THANOM HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN PREPARED TO LEAVE BANGKOK OCTOBER 15 WITH PRAPHAT BUT HAD BEEN TALKED OUT OF GOING BY HIS FAMILY. DAWEE SAID THAT FAMILY MEMBERS, PARTICULARLY THANOM'S DAUGHTER SONGSAMON, HAD CONVINCED THANOM THAT THE

KING WOULD PROTECT HIM AND MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO REMAIN IN THAILAND. FACED WITH THIS STRONG FAMILY PRESSURE, THANOM DECIDED TO STAY BEHIND, IN THE AIR FORCE GUEST HOUSE AT DON MUANG AIRPORT, AT LEAST UNTIL THE KING'S ATTITUDE WAS KNOWN.

4. ON OCTOBER 16, ACCORDING TO DAWEE, AIR FORCE CHIEF MARSHAL BOONCHOO TOOK THE CASE TO THE PALACE AND WAS TOLD THAT THE KING COULD NOT PROTECT THANOM AND FELT STRONGLY THAT HE SHOULD LEAVE IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN SECURITY. WHEN THIS NEWS REACHED THANOM, HE AGREED TO DEPART AND EXPRESSED A PREFERENCE FOR THE UNITED STATES UNTIL HE DECIDED ON A PERMANENT RESIDENCE.

5. DAWEE SAID THAT HE WAS AWARE THAT THANOM DID NOT LEAVE OCTOBER 15, AS WAS GENERAL KRIT. HOWEVER, THIS INFORMATION WAS CONFINED TO A VERY SMALL GROUP TO AVOID PROVOKING FURTHER STUDENT PROTESTS. THAI SECURITY FORCES, WHICH WERE APPARENTLY NOT CUT IN, PROVOKED A SMALL FLAP AT AIRPORT AFTER THANOM'S DEPARTURE BY PRESSURING TWA TO TELL THEM WHAT VIP HAD JUST LEFT ON THEIR FLIGHT.

6. THANOM OBVIOUSLY LEFT THAILAND SICK AT HEART OVER HIS GOVERNMENT'S TRAGIC HANDLING OF STUDENT UNREST AND OVER DEATHS THAT ENSURED. HE WAS REPORTED BY GOOD SOURCES TO HAVE BEEN IN TEARS. THOUGH HE WAS IDENTIFIED AS ONE OF THE "THREE PUBLIC ENEMIES" BY STUDENTS DURING THE RECENT DEMONSTRATIONS, THANOM HAD NOT PREVIOUSLY BEEN A TARGET FOR STUDENT OR OTHER OPPOSITION. HE WAS GENERALLY REGARDED AS A KIND, MODERATE AND PATRIOTIC OFFICIAL WHOSE MAJOR SHORTCOMINGS WERE A TENDENCY TO VACILLATE, A FAILURE TO CONTROL HIS SON NARONG, AND, AS EVENTS THE LAST FEW DAYS HAVE SHOWN, AN INABILITY TO KEEP PACE WITH THE ASPIRATIONS OF HIS PEOPLE.

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